

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### A. Inquisitiveness (*Interview Ratings (IR) 1 and 2*)

1. What do you know about the NLRB? How did you gain your knowledge?
2. Have you had any experience requiring you to use investigatory skills? This could be the need to investigate a dispute, a paper, a scientific experiment, a newspaper article, etc. What did you find particularly challenging and how did you try to meet the challenge?
3. How do you go about learning to perform a new task? Describe a situation where you had to do this.
4. If you thought the alleged discriminatee were fired for a pretextual reason, how would you try to establish whether or not the asserted reason was pretextual?
5. If you had an important neutral witness who was not returning your calls, how would you handle the problem?
6. As a new employee with the NLRB, how would you improve your skills and knowledge quickly?

### B. Imagination (*IR 2 and 3*)

1. Think of a situation in your last job (or in school) where you were confronted with an unusual problem; describe the problem, and what you did to solve it.
2. Give me an example of a problem that you encountered in your job (or at school) where you devised a creative way of handling it.
3. When you had a job to do that was particularly uninteresting, how did you deal with it?
4. Identify a situation where you were required to lead a team to accomplish a short-term goal in a limited period of time (i.e. research project). How did you organize your approach to have the team buy into producing a successful product?
5. If you have never had this situation, identify a project or assignment (work or school) which was given to you with a short deadline. How did you approach the situation so as to accomplish the project within the time allocated?
6. If you have never had either situation, give us an idea of how you would approach these situations.

### C. Sense of humor (*IR 3*)

*(Some may question why it is desirable for a Board agent to have a sense of humor. Although it may not be absolutely essential, it can be argued that a sense of humor helps people diffuse a tense situation, enjoy the sometimes unorthodox tasks we have to do as Board agents, display initiative and good judgment, and relate well to a diversity of people.)*

1. This is a job that often requires you to be in strange places with strange people. It reminds me of being an investigative reporter. If you do not like that, you may not enjoy the work. Can you provide examples of what you have done that show your ability to relate to a wide variety of people in a wide variety of circumstances?
2. To let us assess your flexibility in responding to a situation, can you tell us of any difficult situations you have found yourself in and describe how you coped?
3. Have you been in situations that have been odd, but you managed to cope successfully?

D. Sense of "street smarts" (IR 2, 3)

1. Have you had to get yourself out of a predicament? What was it and how did you get out of it?
2. Have you been involved in a situation where you thought that company (university) policy should be ignored or modified? Why did you think so? What did you do?
3. Has there been a time when you followed company (university) policy even though you had concerns about it? Why did you follow the policy?  
*(Questions 2 and 3 illustrate the need to ask the obverse question to explore the parameters of the applicant's position on a topic and prevent the interviewer from getting a distorted impression by the answer to one question or line of questioning.)*
4. Has there been a time when another person's anger was misdirected at you? How did you deal with this?
5. How do you try to make difficult witnesses more cooperative? How would you begin a conversation with such a witness?
6. Have you had to investigate a situation that required a particularly creative approach? What was the problem, and what was your solution?
7. If you were trying to track down witnesses and the union's witnesses could give names but not addresses or telephone numbers and you did not want to alert the company to your interest in these witnesses, how would you track them down?
8. Do you do Internet research? What resources are you aware of?

E. Even temperament (IR 2, 3)

1. Can you give me an example of a crisis situation in which you were involved?  
*(What is the severity of a situation that the applicant sees as a crisis; was everyday a crisis and always chaotic; does s/he give a specific situation and then explain how s/he resolved it?)*
2. Why was this a crisis situation?

3. What did you do after it was resolved? (*Can candidate follow through from crisis to a resolution; if s/he has overcome crisis in past, s/he is likely to do so in future*).
4. Has there been a time when another person's anger was misdirected at you?
5. Why did this occur and how did you deal with it?
6. How do you handle change, no set schedule, quick changes in response to changed circumstances? Give examples.
7. How do you react with someone who strongly disagrees with you?
8. How do you cope with pressure?
9. How have you handled criticism of your work?

F. Industriousness (*IR 1, 2, 6*)

1. What steps have you taken to become more effective in your position (career or educational) situation?
2. Why did you take those steps?
3. What was the result? (*How did s/he become more effective?*)
4. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty. (*What is his/her definition of "above and beyond"; does it match our requirements?*) Describe another time (or ask how often) do you believe you have gone beyond that required.
5. What do you do when faced with solving a problem? Or, what plan of action do you take when facing a problem or new situation?
6. Describe a time you felt particularly effective.
7. Describe a time when you felt ineffective and exactly what you did about it.

G. Self-starter (*IR 1, 2, 5, 6*)

1. What motivates you to improve and progress in your career (or education)? (*Is this person self-directed or require external motivation such as praise, advancement, or public recognition?*)
2. What do you want from your next (this) job? (*Is the candidate interested in our type of work and does s/he indicate an ability to meet the challenges of this position?*)
3. What would you be able to accomplish in this job that you were not able to in your past job, or that you would not be able to in competing jobs?
4. What is your motivation to enter/continue the labor relations type of work? What interests you the least about this job?
5. Do you prefer to work alone or with others? Why?

H. Independence (*IR 2, 5, 6*)

1. Have you ever had a job where you had to do everything yourself? Describe the job. Did you take the job knowing that you'd have to do everything yourself? How did you do it?
2. Have you ever had a project or assignment where you were partnered with someone else who dropped out before the project was completed? What happened?
3. Describe a situation at your last job (or in school) where you could structure your own work schedule - how did you structure your work?
4. Tell us of any situation (work or personal) where you were required to step in and complete a job or task begun by another individual but only half way finished when you took over. Did you accomplish the task? Did you find it a challenge or a burden? Did you enjoy the task?
5. Give an example of when you were part of a group and each member was required to work separately to accomplish part of an assignment; yet when the group met to assess the progress of the assignments, you were the only member on task. How did you respond? Was the assignment completed, and if so, what part did you play in completing it?

I. Tenacity (*IR 2, 6*)

1. Did you ever run into a dead-end in any project that you've worked on? Describe the project and describe how you determined that you'd reached a dead end.
2. What happened after you made your determination?
3. Have you ever had a project assigned to you after everyone else had given up on the project? Describe the project and what you did to address the assignment.
4. Tell me about a goal that you set for yourself in the past and how successful you were in accomplishing it.
5. Give an example of when you expended a considerable period of time and effort on a project only to be instructed to drop your approach and pick up a new approach devised by a superior. How did you feel about the transition into the revised approach? What discussion of the change did you have with your supervisor? What methods did you use to initiate the use of the new approach in light of the amount of time and effort utilized by your initial approach?

J. Adaptability (*IR 2, 3, 6*)

1. Have you ever had a job where you've reported to more than one person? Describe the situation.
2. Describe a situation where you've had to change your plans at the last moment (either personal or work-related). Why did you have to change the plans and what happened? Did the last-minute change have an effect on your other assignments/commitments? If so, what sort of effect?

3. Tell me about an instance when you had to make a quick decision.
4. You've heard the expression "being able to roll with the punches"; tell me about a time that you had to do that in dealing with a difficult person.
5. Tell me about a time when an upper-level decision or policy change held up your work and what, if anything, you did about it.

K. Ability to "think on one's feet" (*IR 2, 5, 6*)

1. Have you been in any situation where you believe you have had to "think on your feet"? How did you handle the situation?
2. Describe an occasion where you were presented with an unexpected situation and you had insufficient time to seek assistance or guidance. What steps did you take to deal with the situation?
3. Have you done any moot court or debate club work? Describe how you have improved your skills in this area.
4. Can you think of any work or school related emergencies you have handled particularly well? Not so well?
5. Does trial (hearing officer) work appeal to you? What about it appeals to you?

L. Ability to reason (*IR 2, 4, 5, 6*)

1. Can you tell us about a particularly difficult writing assignment you have had recently -- on a job or in a class? Tell us what the issues were and how you analyzed them.
2. What has been the most difficult legal case or assignment you have had? Tell us your decision and your supporting analysis.
3. Use hypothetical(s). (*Examples follow questions below.*)

M. Good judgment (*IR 2, 5, 6*)

1. If you had it to do over again, would you have taken the same course of study, the same career path? Why?
2. Tell me about the most difficult job-related task you have faced. (*What is the applicant's definition of difficult task and what type of judgment was used to deal with it?*)
3. What have you learned from jobs (courses/extracurricular activities) you have had? (*Apply question to a particular job or activity shown in the candidate's resume, not just a broad question. Has candidate learned and carried forward experience?*)
4. When faced with an unprecedented decision, what did you do? (*Does candidate take action, wait until gain approval, or do nothing at all?*)

N. Listening skills (IR 2, 3, 6)

1. What qualities should a good listener have?
2. Do you have those qualities? Of those qualities which is your strongest/weakest?
3. How have you shown your ability to listen well? (*whether work, education, or free time*) How would you improve your listening skills?

O. Ability to verbalize and communicate effectively (IR 2, 5, 6)

1. How important were communication and interaction with others in your prior job? If important, describe your skill in those areas.
2. In your last job assignment, how good was your supervisor at communicating with you? Have you ever had problems communicating with your supervisors, fellow employees, or clients or customers? What were the problems? How did you overcome them?
3. What experience have you had with miscommunication with a fellow employee (professor) and how did you solve the problem?
4. To what extent have you had the opportunity to work with or associate with people from all walks of life, different cultures or ethnic backgrounds, or different ages? Have there been challenges in communicating? What were they, and how did you overcome them?
5. What experiences have you had in public speaking or speaking to the public? How did you improve your skills in this area?

P. Written communication skills (IR 4, 5, 6)

1. How much writing have you had to do in school? How much writing have you had to do in your job experiences? Describe the types of writing you had to do.
2. Have you had teachers or supervisors who were particularly good at training you how to write effectively? Describe what they did that was effective.
3. How has your approach to writing changed as a result of the training you had?
4. What do you strive for in your writing? What is good writing?
5. There are many skills lawyers employ -- counseling, researching the law, writing, investigating the facts, and trying cases, among other things. Which of these skills do you feel are your strongest? The weakest? What do you most enjoy? Not enjoy? Why to all questions? (*You are likely to get a more honest answer if you ask this before you tell them what we do. You want to be able to weed out individuals who are unwilling or unable to do significant types of work assignments. At the same time, you may be willing to accept certain weaknesses in return for other strengths, depending upon your staffing needs.*)

Q. Desire to assume a neutral role *(IR 1, 2, 5)*

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you were forced to determine the truth when there were two differing versions of the situation? Describe the situation and how you made your determination.
2. If you do not work for a neutral governmental agency, where would you rather work? On behalf of management, or on behalf of labor? Why?
3. Give an example of when you were ever required to hear both sides of a dispute and render a determination as to which side presented a more valid and persuasive position. What factors did you use to reach that determination? Did you enjoy this role? What were the difficulties? What was most enjoyable?
4. Where else are you applying for work? *(The answer can be significant in revealing their truthfulness, true interests, and diligence in their search for work.)*
5. If you cannot get a job as a neutral, what do you see as the pros and cons of working as a management representative? As a union representative? Why?
6. Have you ever been in a position where you had to make an unpopular decision? How did you handle it? What responses did you get from the people affected?

R. Ability to put aside pre-conceived biases *(IR 1, 2, 3, 5)*

1. Give an example of a situation in which you had to advocate a position with which you disagreed. Give an example in which you changed your position.
2. Name three of your biases, requirements, or preferences. *(A bias need not be inherently negative, such as "I like to work with others dedicated to performing well", but can prove interesting as to how the applicant responds and what his/her preconceived notions are.)* Give examples of how you dealt with those.
3. What types of people try your patience? Who was the most difficult person you have had to deal with? What was your relationship? *(i.e. boss, customer, co-worker)*. What was the problem and how was it resolved?
4. What kinds of problems do you enjoy solving?
5. Give me an example of how you completed a project despite obstacles. *(Candidate should describe the project, his/her assessment, the obstacle, and how s/he overcame the obstacle.)*

S. Ability to work with a diverse population *(IR 3)*

1. What was the make-up of the work force in the various jobs that you've had in the past?
2. What sort of outside-of-school projects have you been involved in? Describe the groups that were serviced in the various projects.
3. Can you recall any challenge that you have had in working with anyone in your former workplace or school? What was the nature of the challenge? How did you handle it? Why do you think it was a challenge?

4. What has been your prior experience in working with persons of a different cultural background? Give an example of any experience that you have had (work or personal) of when you have looked at a known circumstance differently because of someone else's point of view.

T. Ability to elicit story from witnesses (*IR 2, 3*)

1. What experience/education have you had interviewing people?
2. How do you balance your reliance on facts with intuition?
3. What is (would be) your method of obtaining information in an interview situation? (*Does the candidate prepare in advance, determine the objective of the interview, or have basic questions?*)
4. Use a role-play. (*See Hypothetical B below.*)

U. Genuine concern for others (*IR 2, 3*)

1. Why are you interested in labor relations? What demonstrated interest can you tell me about?
2. How can you demonstrate that your interest in this type of work (labor relations) is sincere?
3. Tell me about an activity you've remained interested in outside of work over the past several years. (*fund raising, civic/political activity, scouts*) Do you perform any voluntary or community service?
4. What were your activities in school? (*related to others*)
5. Describe all jobs, even part-time jobs, during school years. (*This tells you what types of people the applicant has actually dealt with.*)

V. Money and material rewards are not paramount - (*IR 1*)

1. What was the job that you've had where you got paid the least amount? What was good about it? What was bad about it?
2. What was the job that you've had where you got paid the most amount of money? What did you like about that job? What did you not like about the job?
3. What role has work had in your life? Why have you taken the jobs that you've taken? Why do you work?
4. Are you aware of the GS schedule and its step promotion system? Where would you like to see your progression within that system in 5 years?
5. Why do you seek work in this Region versus other Regional offices or Washington D.C.?

W. Commitment to and interest in statute (IR 1, 2, 5, 6)

1. Have you ever been in a job situation where a dispute or concern arose involving you and other employees? Describe what it was and what happened.
2. Have you had any exposure to the National Labor Relations Act? Where did you attain the exposure? What was the extent of the exposure?
3. Have you ever assisted anyone with a labor or employment question, issue or dispute? When and where? Tell us of your involvement.
4. How do you view the role of the National Labor Relations Act in the overall scheme of government? Is the NLRB a relevant agency?
5. What public service or volunteer work have you done? Describe your role in detail. What did you like or dislike about this experience?
6. What are the most important factors that you look for in a job?

X. Ability to work as part of a team (IR 3)

1. When were you a member (or leader) of a team, in a professional or educational situation? (*What is applicant's definition of team; does candidate use "I" or "we" to describe success?*)
2. What was your participation in this effort?
3. What were the results or accomplishments of this group?
4. In your prior job, how much work was done on your own, as part of a team? Which role did you enjoy the most?
5. How important was communication and interaction with others in your past job?
6. In a group of 3-5 (*and/or 6-10*) people deciding issues relating to a (joint project or program), what is your typical role? (*Applicant should discuss leadership, ideas, flexibility and give specific examples.*)

Y. Ability to multi-task and deal with related stress (IR 2, 5, 6)

1. Tell me about your current job or school schedule. How do you spend your time during a particular week? When have you been most busy, and how have you handled it?
2. Have there been times when you have felt overwhelmed by your workload?
3. Describe the situation and how you handled it.

## Z. Wrap-up questions

1. What are your long-term career goals? Where do you see your self in 5 years? In 10 years? *(If the applicant sees him/herself as a zoologist, then this may not be the job for them. Although an applicant may say they want to be a GS-15 supervisor, if promotions appear limited, a suitable reply can be that many find being a field examiner or attorney a rewarding and satisfying career. However, in the Agency, as well as in the rest of the federal government, it appears many in management will be eligible for retirement within next 5 or more years, so promotional opportunities may increase.)* How do you plan to achieve those goals?
2. What would your (did your past) supervisor(s) say is your best trait(s)? What would your (did your past) supervisor(s) say needs more development? What do you believe you excel in? Why? If you could change one thing about yourself, to add to your effectiveness, what would it be? Why? In viewing your candidacy for this position, in what areas do you feel you would be a particularly strong performer? Why? What do you see as some of your development needs in this position?
3. What would you like to tell us that wasn't asked or mentioned before?
4. Why should we hire you over the other applicants?

## **HYPOTHETICALS**

It may be less confusing to the applicant (*and perhaps the interviewer who may be developing or altering a hypothetical on the spot*) to use job titles (plant manager, supervisor, discriminatee, or union representative) of the participants in the hypothetical, rather than individual names (Tom, Dick, or Hariette).

### **A. Applicant with little or no work or experience in labor relations**

1. You know little when you get the initial charge, and it is up to you to develop the evidence. For example, we recently had an employee who filed a charge alleging that, as an EMT, he had been fired for failing to determine if a patient was really dead before declaring him to be dead. He alleges his discharge was due to his union activity.

How would you investigate this case?

2. We had another case in which an employee, a chef in a nursing home, alleges he was fired for union activity, but his employer says it was for stealing a case of soft drinks at an annual company picnic, where the food and drink were donated and the proceeds go to pay for extras for the patients.

How would you investigate this case? (*You can make up the case and answers as you go along. It can be particularly helpful to have the discriminatee allegedly fired for serious misconduct. This enables you to determine if the applicant can overcome a novice's quick dismissal of a misconduct case without exploring pretext, disparate treatment, and other defenses.*)

## **B. Role-Play**

An effective method for this role-play is to do it twice, once with a supervisor, Assistant to the Regional Director, or Regional Attorney, and then in the second interview with the Regional Director and others. After the first interview the candidate is told what s/he did well and what areas needed further exploration. Then, the candidate's response to the second round is reflective of the candidate's ability to listen, absorb information, and then put it into practice. A region using this method found that a few candidates do well in both role-play situations, many do poorly in both, and some poorly in the first, but extremely well in the second. The region did not use the same hypothetical in the second interview of the candidate, but one similar in content.

1. A charge was filed alleging that the employee was fired for her union activity during an organizing campaign. You are the Board agent taking the initial affidavit from the terminated employee. The setting is a production plant, but the employee is a janitor. The Employer has told the employee that she was fired for tardiness. The employee knows the answer to any question that is asked.

*(Depending on the ability of the applicant, Employer knowledge of union activity is easy or hard to establish - i.e., the Employer easily overheard a union discussion or not; the person who heard the conversation was clearly or not, a supervisor. The applicant learns through questions asked, that the employee was actually late on the date fired, and has a history of tardiness. Again, depending on the applicant's background, either subtly or more directly s/he is told that the Employer has tolerated tardiness for years and has done nothing about it and that since the employee is a janitor, not a production employee, tardiness is not a major issue. The applicant is encouraged to keep exploring union activity, Employer knowledge and disparate treatment.)*

2. Similar situation to above, but insert a technical employee terminated for a major error that cost the Employer substantial monetary loss.

*(Suggested examples have the theme of a Board agent taking the initial affidavit of an 8(a)(3) who has engaged in union organizing activity, but was fired for good reason, unless disparate treatment is established.)*

### **C. Applicant with education or background in labor relations**

The Angelica Company has had a long term bargaining relationship with International Association of Employees Union, which represents the production employees. The Union files a charge alleging that the Employer has implemented a drug testing policy without notice and bargaining with the Union.

Who would you want to talk to? *(Employer and Union are obvious, but does candidate specify representative who was directly involved in negotiations, labor relations, or implementation of the policy? Also, employees provide most direct testimony about past practice, when new practice was announced, how the new policy differs from prior practice, and whether discipline occurred due to new policy.)*

What information would you want to know? *(e.g., what was the past practice; what are the specific provisions of the new policy; when did it take effect; to whom does the policy apply; why didn't the Employer notify and bargain with the Union; how did the Union learn of the new policy; is there a contract in effect; any provisions in the contract that permit the Employer to make such changes; has a grievance been filed; has any employee been adversely affected; which employee-represented or non-represented?)*

What documentation would you ask for? *(e.g., contract, grievance, any correspondence between the parties about the topic; discipline; copy of drug policy)*

What would be the remedy if there were a violation? *(Deferral if there is a contract, bargain; rescind discipline)*

### **D. Attorney interview**

You are assigned the presentation of a case to an administrative law judge. The case was originally assigned to another attorney who abruptly resigned. The allegation is that employee Mary Munoz was terminated because she was trying to bring a union into the work place. You review the file, and you notice that a significant aspect of the case is established by the testimony of Henry Hernandez, a co-worker of Munoz. You also notice a memo to the file that at the time that employee Mary was terminated, co-worker Henry Hernandez was Mary's boyfriend, but that since her termination, they are not speaking to each other; and that Henry did not return any of your predecessor attorney's telephone calls.

Is this a problem? If so, why?

What would you do in this situation?

How would you go about securing Henry's cooperation?

What would you do if Henry refuses to cooperate?